

MAYOR BOB YOUNG
SEPTEMBER 24, 2003

Good Morning.

Dayton, Dr. Bragg, Mrs. Sellers, Ms Cannon (that's an appropriate name today).

I want to thank you for the opportunity to be with you today on this important occasion. I want to put into context what this marker means not only to the City of Augusta, but our country as a whole.

Last March, First Lady Laura Bush announced a substantial initiative to focus on our country's vast heritage and natural resources. The program is called "Preserve America."

At the same time, President Bush signed an executive order directing Federal agencies to inventory their historic properties and to engage states, communities and tribes to develop heritage tourism programs.

According to Chairman John Nau of the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation: "Preserve America will call all Americans to explore our heritage, discover our special places and share and cherish these national treasures."

Georgia is responding. The Georgia Civil War Heritage Trails program is a Preserve America success story.

The planned trails that trace General Sherman's March to the Sea and the Atlanta Campaign are great examples of how heritage tourism uses existing community assets to bring into local communities visitors and new dollars.

History is economic development. Research shows that people participating in heritage tourism will stay an extra night in a city and spend more money than a casual tourist.

Communities don't have to build assets for heritage tourism; the assets are already here. We merely need to provide the interpretation.

Doctor Bragg gave us a great overview of the Powder Works and the contributions of Colonel Rains. The design, construction and operation were indeed an engineering marvel in its time. And, the powder works' importance to the war effort could not be understated.

I've often wondered whether it was powder made by Augustans that propelled the minie ball that severely wounded my great, great, great grandfather at the battle of New Market, Virginia in May of 1864. Yes, he was on the other side.

Most of the physical evidence of the powder works has been lost to history. The buildings are gone, save the chimney. Artifacts, such as paperwork and products, are extremely rare. The Augusta Museum of History has an outstanding collection of architectural drawings of the powder works, but not even that set is complete.

Even though we know a lot about what went on here, there's a lot we don't know - and never will.

That's why the interpretation of history is perhaps more important than simply recording history. Interpretation, as we see on this magnificent plaque, gives context to what we do know of the powder works.

Now, tourists will have new reasons to stop along this canal and understand more fully why this chimney remains here even today.

Soon, a similar marker at Augusta State University will mark for eternity the site of the U. S. Arsenal, which so ably served two countries – before, during, and after the War Between the States.

These markers themselves are part of a much larger effort to inaugurate Georgia's Civil War Heritage Trails program with the infamous March to the Sea.

The story has been here since the fall and winter of 1864. It's taken us this long to recognize it and to tell it.

Visitors will come to Augusta specifically to learn about the military infrastructure that supported not just the Confederate Army in the Augusta area, but the powder, munitions and armament that enabled other armies across the Confederacy to confidently meet their adversaries in life and death clashes.

General Sherman did not enter Augusta (he wrote after the war he never had any intention of invading Augusta). But, visitors will not have far to drive to walk the scenes of conflict.

One of the fiercest engagements of the March to the Sea was a running cavalry duel, fought not far from here in Burke County. Confederate General Joe Wheeler chased Union General Hugh Judson Kilpatrick across the fields and past the main house at Belleview Plantation and on to Buckhead Church.

The full story is sprinkled throughout our landscape.

The cities of Louisville, Waynesboro and Millen still bear the scars of being torched by 60,000 invading Union troops.

In Sandersville, the Brown House, where General Sherman spent the night, has been brought back to life.

At Magnolia Springs in Jenkins County, visitors will learn about the prisoner of war stockade that was reputed to be the largest in the entire world.

And, a tour wouldn't be complete without including Scarborough Landing, the railroad stop that looks today much as it did in 1864.

This is why Georgia Civil War Heritage Trails is important to our community and state.

This is why President Bush has undertaken "Preserve America."

And this brings to focus the much larger puzzle into which we fit the marker we dedicate today.

In announcing Preserve America last March, Mrs. Bush said: "Our land is the foundation upon which the American story is written. Our history is rooted in buildings, parks and towns."

So, let us now walk the trails of history in Georgia.

Through this marker, let Georgia history come alive.